

Office of the Associate Director for Extramural Program: Summary Statement

by Wilford L. Nusser

Research Grants

During FY 1977, 247 Regular Research, Program Project, and Research Career Development Award applications were reviewed, a slight decrease from FY 1976. Awards were made to 102 noncompeting and 120 competing projects from FY 1977 appropriations, for a total of \$18.4 million. In addition, 17 projects for a total of \$1.5 million were supported from energy related pass-through funds provided under an interagency agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency.

Manpower Development Resources

Four Institutional Training Grants awarded prior to the passage of Public Law 93-348 received a total of \$625,000. This was the terminal award for these grants in accordance with the phase-out provisions of the law. Seven Institutional National Research Service Awards initiated in 1975 were continued at a level of \$919,000. The FY 1977 appropriation provides for Individual Fellowships at a level of \$1.0 million and 15 new Institutional Awards for \$1.5 million.

Since NIEHS is the prime Federal agency currently supporting research training in the area of toxicology, the NIEHS staff is concerned that current training funds available will result in a tremendous deficit in the number of qualified people trained over the next few years to protect the public health and implement the mandates of the Toxic Substances Control Act.

Environmental Health Sciences (EHS) Center Programs

Environmental Health Sciences Centers, which are university-based, comprise an essential national

resource and are an integral part of the strategy of NIEHS in serving the national needs in environmental health research. These Centers perform high quality, multidisciplinary research in areas of high relevance to the mission of NIEHS and serve to attract and train outstanding students to meet future research needs of the Nation. During FY 1977, the NIEHS supported seven EHS Centers with funds totaling \$7.2 million.

Because of the importance of the EHS Centers in meeting National needs, communication between the Centers, the Institute Director and his staff, and the National Advisory Environmental Health Sciences Council (NAEHSC) is maintained at an effective level through biannual meetings of the Center Directors, frequent visits and telephone contacts by extramural staff. Members of the NAEHSC Subcommittee for Environmental Health Sciences Centers frequently accompany staff on oversight visits, as well as attending Center Directors' meetings. The Subcommittee provides liaison between the Institute, the Advisory Council, and the Center Directors by keeping abreast and discussing research problems and accomplishments, new environmental concerns, and program directions.

The Fifteenth Semiannual Meeting of the Center Directors was held on October 17-19, 1976, at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, with Dr. David P. Rall, Director, as host. In addition to NIEHS staff and Center Directors, the NIH/OD staff was represented by Dr. Ann Kaufman and Dr. Norman Mansfield. Invited speakers included Dr. Henry M. Kissman, Associate Director, Specialized Information Services, National Library of Medicine, and Dr. Sidney Wolff, Public Citizens Health Research Group, Washington, D. C. In addition to each Center Director discussing highlights of the programs being conducted in

his Center, a full day was devoted to a presentation and review of the intramural scientific program of NIEHS. Since every third meeting of the Center Directors is held at the NIEHS, this further serves to keep the Center Directors aware of the main thrusts of the Institute and enables them to maintain a parallelism covering areas of need and new initiatives which the NIEHS intramural program is unable to undertake.

The Sixteenth Meeting of the EHS Center Directors was held at the University of Rochester (New York) School of Medicine and Dentistry with Dr. Thomas Clarkson serving as host. In addition to the Center Directors, the NIEHS staff and Subcommittee of the Council, Dr. Leon Golberg, President of the Chemical Industry Institute of Toxicology (CIIT) served as the invited speaker and made a most interesting presentation regarding the CIIT, its programs and objectives including the current status of development. This was of special interest to all attending in that the CIIT is funded by a consortium of companies in the chemical industry as a "public" resource for research on industrial chemicals toxicity testing and for training which has a direct relationship with many of the areas of current research at NIEHS and in the EHS Centers. Consistent with the usual format, the program at the University of Rochester was presented and reviewed for a full day with the Director, NIEHS, and other Center Directors presenting highlights of their programs on the second day.

At the request of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, NIEHS was requested to prepare for the spring hearings a plan for developing Marine and Freshwater Biomedical Centers. Dr. Rall made

the presentation during the hearings, outlining the probable scope of such a program which would envision funding a few of the currently excellent marine institutes on a competitive basis to encourage the use of marine and freshwater species as models for environmental health research. This has previously been done on a small scale through project grants and has proved very useful in determining pollutant levels, toxic substances, as well as physiological studies where these species present a better research model than mammalian species to study human health effects. The NIEHS is ready to mount such a program in the event appropriations are made for this type research.

Supported Research Highlights

During the year, NIEHS grantees have made substantive contributions to each of the categorical programs of the Institute. Considerable progress has been made and the understanding of basic toxicological and pathological events relating to human health, genetic and reproductive anomalies, neurological disorders and various other syndromes ascribable to environmental factors. Highlights from the programs supported during the year which illustrate these achievements are presented herewith. Of particular interest is the initiation during the year of a new research program, the Young Environmental Scientist Health Research Grant program, which was designed to encourage young investigators to develop an interest in problems of environmental health sciences and to provide support for their initial independent research efforts.